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AUTHOR Miller, Juliet V.
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ABSTRACT

This is one of a series which focuses on innovations in the training and supervision of counselors. It discusses co-counseling by providing: (1) a definition of the procedure; (2) a description of models of practice; (3) a discussion of the effects of using co-counseling; (4) suggestions for possible applications of the procedure; and (5) steps to follow when designing co-counseling experiences. A bibliography is included. (Author)

PERSONNEL SERVICES REVIEW



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COUNSELING & PERSONNEL

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SERIES 1

Innovations in the Training And Supervision of Counselors

CO-COUNSELING

ED 036 673

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PERSONNEL SERVICES REVIEW

Series 1

"Innovations in the Training and Supervision of Counselors"

Co-Counseling

Juliet V. Miller

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FORWARD

The Personnel Services Review is an ongoing publication Series which has been developed by CAPS to inform personnel workers about new developments in a number of personnel services areas. There will be several different series of the Personnel Services Review. Each series will focus on a broad area of personnel work practice. Within each series there will be a number of specific issues (varying from five to ten depending on the series). Each of these issues will concentrate on a specific practice, procedure or method. The goal of these publications is to enable the reader to: (1) become aware of a practice, procedure or method; (2) learn about the ways in which this practice has been applied by others; (3) understand the underlying theory behind the practice; (4) consider possible applications of the practice in a variety of settings; and (5) consider ways that the practice might be implemented in his own personnel work program.

This particular Personnel Services Review Series is entitled, "Innovations in the Supervision and Training of Counselors." The series will contain about ten issues. Each issue will focus on an innovation which has direct relevance for the training and supervision of counselors. The application of these innovations to both the pre-service and in-service training and supervision of counselors will be considered. The series is intended to be used by counselor educators, state department personnel and guidance and/or pupil personnel administrators in the development of programs to assist counselor trainees and practicing counselors learn and improve counseling skills.

CO-COUNSELING

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THESE PROBLEMS?

As you help practicing counselors and counselor trainees develop new counseling behaviors, you may sometimes feel:

Beginning practicum students or counselors learning new counseling behaviors often are so anxious that learning is greatly impeded.

Although you try to encourage peer learning, you would like to find some way of heightening this experience.

You are sometimes frustrated because you can give feedback to the trainee only after the interview is completed rather than while it is still in session.

Co-counseling is a training procedure which has implications for the preceding training problems.

WHAT IS CO-COUNSELING?

Co-counseling is the procedure of using more than one counselor in a counseling interview.

MODELS OF PRACTICE

Recently, there have been reports of the use of co-counseling in the training and supervision of counselors.

Trainee-Supervisor Teams

Van Atta has reported the use of co-counseling as a supervisory technique in the University of Texas program for training counseling psychologists. In this program co-counseling has been used as a supervisory technique with pre-practicum and practicum students as well as with students interning at the University counseling center. Van Atta sees co-counseling as a supervisory technique which enables trainees to work with cases which may present problems with which they have had little experience and which allows the supervisor to observe under conditions which enable him to give immediate rather than delayed feedback.

Interview participants include the practicum supervisor, the counselor trainee and the client. It is stressed that although the supervisor is at times an observer of the counseling interaction, the real process of co-counseling must include a triangular interaction between all three interview participants. Although there are many types of supervisor interventions possible in co-counseling, in the University of Texas program specific interventions occurred when there was client resistance to the counselor, when there was uncomfortable silence, when the supervisor saw a need to suggest a new activity or interpretation to the counselor, and/or when the counselor solicited the support of the supervisor.

Teams of Two Trainees

Another application of co-counseling had been reported by Corsini, Calia and Van Nevers (1968). The authors report the

use of co-counseling in an eight week NDEA Institute designed to emphasize the development of group counseling skills. Initially, the enrollees participated in a sensitivity training experience. After this experience, they participated in a group counseling practicum which employed co-counseling. In this application, two different-sexed counselor trainees worked together in group counseling activities. The trainees were paired on the basis of sociometric data. This data was collected from their peers and from their T-Group trainers. Assignments to practicum supervisory groups were made according to co-counseling pairs with three pairs constituting a group.

Some of the reasons for using the co-counseling model for training were that the co-counselors provide a model of good interpersonal relationships for the clients, the counselors learn from each other, the procedure reduces counselor trainees anxiety, and continuation of the counseling session is possible even if one counselor is unable to attend. The counselor-trainees indicated that they had learned from each other, that they were more comfortable than in situations where they were the only counselor, that the pairings were effective and that they had been able to resolve the conflicts which arose with their partners.

A final example of co-counseling is reported by Mallars. In this report the co-counseling approach and the individual counseling approach were compared. In the co-counseling approach (counseling team approach) two counselor trainees worked together on a counseling case involving an individual client. In this application, one counselor trainee played an active role while the other served as a recorder, supporter, and reflector of feelings. A measure of client, counselor and supervisor satisfaction was used and all three groups found the counseling team approach significantly more satisfying. The author suggests that co-counseling increases the security of the counselor trainee thereby increasing overall satisfaction with the counseling interview.

GENERALIZATIONS

1. Because of the differences (sex, level of training, counseling style) between members of the co-counseling pair, a greater degree of expertise can be brought to the counseling interview. Also, more behavior models are provided including both male/female models and models of good

interpersonal relationships.

2. Counselors have indicated that they are less anxious in co-counseling situations than when they are functioning alone. This means that co-counseling may be an effective way of reducing the anxiety of both counselor trainees and practicing counselors who are developing new skills.
3. Peer learning is an outcome of co-counseling. In counselor education settings, peer learning is often encouraged, but the interdependency of the co-counseling situation heightens the interaction and feedback between the counselor trainees.
4. As a supervisory technique, co-counseling allows for continuous, on-the-spot feedback. This means that counselor trainees may work with cases which are beyond their scope of training since a supervisor is present to exert some control over the nature of the interview. Also the supervisor can illustrate counseling behaviors during the interview rather than describing them to the trainee after the interview has ended.
5. A criticism of co-counseling may be the presence of a third person dilutes the counseling relationship. However, it has been argued that this factor may also act as a safeguard against overly intense, potentially dangerous relationships.
6. The presence of a third person in the interview situation can also be a major facilitator since the supervisor can intervene in moments of resistance and inactivity.
7. The use of co-counseling can help insure continuity in counseling since the absence of one counselor does not require cancellation of the counseling session.
8. The use of co-counseling requires careful selection of counselors. Previous experience in a sensitivity experience is one approach to preparation. It is generally felt that counseling team members should have had considerable interaction before they initiate a co-counseling experience. Such procedures as role-playing to test their ability to work together can be effective.
9. When co-counseling is used in the practicum situation, it reduces the number of clients needed. Also in counseling

settings, e.g., university counseling centers, where interns are used to help with the caseload, co-counseling can be used to train these interns.

ACTION POSSIBILITIES

1. Co-counseling can be used to introduce pre-practicum students to the counseling process. In this application, the trainees might function more as a participant-observer.
2. Practicum students can be paired into co-counseling teams. This model may be particularly effective in group counseling practicum or in beginning practicum experiences where the trainee has a high degree of anxiety. Co-counselor pairs can use different types of roles. In group counseling situations, both counselors might play an active role in the counseling interview. In individual counseling situations, one counselor might take the active role while the other acts more as a participant-observer who provides feedback.
3. A practicum supervisor and a counselor trainee can form a co-counseling team thus allowing immediate feedback and suggestions from the supervisor. If this approach is used it is again important that the co-counselors have defined roles. The trainee can play the active role while the supervisor combines the participant-observer role with occasional periods of active intervention. It has been stressed that during these periods of active intervention, a pattern of triangular interaction should exist. The supervisor does not "take over" for the trainees rather he acts more as a mediator to enhance communication between the trainee and the client.
4. Co-counseling can be used as an in-service-training technique to help practicing counselors develop new counseling skills. Members of co-counseling teams used for in-service-training purposes might include two practicing counselors, one of which is more highly skilled in a particular counseling area than the other, or a practicing counselor and an outside consultant, e.g., counselor educator.
5. Co-counseling can be effective as an on-going counseling procedure. When different-sexed counselors work in pairs in counseling situations, it provides

a family-like constellation, a choice of models for counselees to identify with, and a model of interpersonal relationships. These effects can be particularly important in group counseling situations where the dynamics are complex.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. A first step in implementing co-counseling is to decide which model of co-counseling will be used. Two possible models are the supervision model where a supervisor and a trainee are paired or the peer learning model where two trainees are paired.
2. Another important consideration is how the co-counseling teams will function. It is necessary to specify how the pair will operate in the actual counseling interview. Some possibilities are: 1) both will actively participate in the counseling process, 2) one will participate and the other will act as a participant-observer, or 3) one will participate but the other will intervene to facilitate the counseling process.
3. It is also important to develop a criteria for the selection of counseling teams. Some possible methods of selection are self, peer, and/or supervisor selection. In addition to the compatibility of the teams, some writers have stressed the importance of having opposite sex pairs to provide models for the client or clients.
4. Pre-experiences need to be planned to help the teams learn to work together effectively. Some possibilities here are sensitivity or practicum group experiences.
5. Finally, it is important to develop methods of evaluating the effectiveness of the co-counseling experience. This evaluation might include feedback from the team members and the clients.

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The use of co-counseling as a supervisory process with practicum students is described. Possible types of supervisor intervention are described.

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